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TO AMEMBASSY TIRANA

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TAGS: PARM PGOV PREL NATO SI AL

SUBJECT: THE WAY AHEAD ON ALBANIAN MUNITIONS
DEMILITARIZATION

REF: TIRANA 775

Classified By: EUR/SCE DAS Stuart Jones Reasons 1.4 (B), (C), and (D)

ACTION REQUEST AND SUMMARY

¶1. (U) This is an action request. Please see paras 8-10. Department supports Post's reftel request for a one-year assignment of a uniformed US military EOD commissioned officer to the GOA Ministry of Defense as a technical advisor to the Minister of Defense. The Department is collaborating with the Department of Defense on a way forward, ensuring this request is part of a broader plan to coordinate USG efforts to help the GOA implement its commitments to reduce its munitions stockpiles. END ACTION REQUEST AND SUMMARY.

BACKGROUND

¶2. (C) GOA requested through Embassy Tirana USG assistance to secure Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) support from the Department of Defense (DoD). This position would provide technical EOD advice to the MOD as it eliminates 100,000 tons of "destabilized unexploded conventional munitions (DUCMs)." DefMin Oketa stated this effort is Albania's highest national security priority. However, the MOD has been slow to implement its "National Demilitarization Plan," due to bureaucratic red-tape, internal bickering, and paralysis at the working level, where officers resist implementing orders for fear of being scape-goated should there be another Gerdec-like explosion. US contractors have also reported instances where site managers have requested money to facilitate the start of operations.

USG EFFORTS

¶3. (U) The Department's Conventional Weapons Destruction Program executed by PM/WRA provides assistance in the management, prioritization, destruction and demilitarization of small arms/light weapons (SA/LW), destruction and demilitarization of designated excess and unstable munitions, and facilities upgrades of weapons and ammunition storage facilities. PM/WRA assists countries that lack the expertise and financial wherewithal to properly reduce these stocks and face threats from illicit proliferation or accidental explosion of munitions.

¶4. (U) The Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA) is PM/WRA's DoD counterpart in this program. PM/WRA and DTRA work collaboratively and coordinate closely with US Embassies, Regional Commands, OSD and the Joint staff. Since 2006, PM/WRA has obligated \$8.4 million for US contractors to aid the GOA in its demilitarization efforts; however, the GOA has not availed itself of all the funds available. Beginning in FY10, PM/WRA expects to request \$2 million a year until 2020. The availability of these funds, and additional resources, may be contingent on the GOA's use of currently-obligated funds.

¶5. (U) Department supports Post's request for a one-year assignment of a uniformed commissioned U.S. military EOD officer. The position will be referred to as the "U.S.

Munitions Advisor to the Albanian Military." Duties include:

-- Coordination of DoD support to USG efforts aimed at reducing Albania's stockpile of excess and unstable munitions;
-- Facilitating military-to-military liaison on EOD matters;
-- Advising the Minister of Defense on operational and training requirements in accordance with U.S. Army standards;
-- Providing unbiased and expert technical advice;
-- Monitoring Albanian Armed Forces, (AAF) implementation and progress on the National Ammunition Demilitarization Plan, providing feedback to GOA and USG stakeholders, and close coordination with relevant Department of State offices.

¶6. (U) The Department is providing a formal exec sec request memo to DoD for a candidate from active duty, National Guard, or Reserve forces. As a uniformed U.S. military officer, the detailee would command the respect necessary to work with the AAF. The Department also supports EUCOM's effort to provide a two-person EOD expert team for a 120-day assignment until the Munitions Advisor is assigned.

¶7. (U) The Munitions Advisor is part of a larger effort to help the GOA implement its commitments regarding destruction of conventional munitions. This whole-of-government approach is reflected in the Interagency Coordination Plan, which brings together relevant USG activities in Albania. This plan - currently being coordinated between State, DoD and USAID - can facilitate complementary efforts, benefiting both the USG and the GOA.

ALBANIA'S NEED TO ACT (Action Request)

¶8. (U) While USG resources are an important part of supporting the GOA's demilitarization efforts, the government of Albania must take basic, already-agreed upon steps to ensure continued international support and the success of operations. Assistant Secretary Kimmitt (Political and Military Affairs) and DAS Jones (EUR/SCE) delivered the substance of the following points in their meetings with Defmin Oketa December 5. Post should reinforce these messages at the highest appropriate level. Post may be leave behind the points as a non-paper:

-- The U.S. welcomes the GOA's willingness to address the problem posed by unexploded ordnance. We especially appreciate the efforts of the MOD to prepare the National Demilitarization Plan.

-- We encourage the GOA to hasten resolution of the Gerdec investigation so that the dangerous materiel located at the site can finally be demilitarized as opposed to merely being moved to other sites.

-- We applaud your efforts to expand your pool of qualified EOD experts; we encourage you to work with international partners, such as NATO, on training. We stand ready to help as well.

-- We urge you to accelerate the pace of demilitarization in general. Continued delay is jeopardizing international demilitarization support:

-- We appeal to you to begin operations at Mjekes and Polican sites as soon as possible. Both lines were supposed to begin operations August 1 and have experienced numerous set backs, though they have already undergone successful preparatory test runs.

-- We encourage you to appoint a stronger Demilitarization Czar, directly accountable to the

Minister of Defense. The Demil Czar will have authority to oversee all demilitarization activities and issue binding orders to all GOA personnel involved. Our in-country experts tell us the position currently held by Mr. Fatmir Bozdo does not possess the requisite authority for the task at hand.

-- We urge MOD Budget Director Armand Tartari to work with the Ministry of Finance to establish and fund the "Special Demilitarization Fund" before the end of the year. If the account is not established by December 31, 2008, the 143 million Lek (\$1.5 million) set aside by the MOD for demilitarization will expire. Funding the account will show the international community that the GOA is serious about demil.

-- We request the MOD reconsider its decision to delay destroying small arms munitions. We have made special resources available for that purpose. It is more important to act decisively than delay demilitarization of these armaments due to their perceived low-risk.

-- We urge the GOA to facilitate entry into the country, without duty, of support machinery needed by US contractors to carry out demilitarization operations.

-- We encourage the GOA to establish NATO Maintenance and Supply Agency (NAMSA) as a mechanism to carry out an orderly, managed and long-term project to destroy and demilitarize the designated 100,000 tons of excess and unstable ammunition in Albania.

¶9. (U) The Department strongly discourages use/employment of any local Albanian ammunition NGOs or contractors that cannot be certified by NATO or a NATO executive to meet NATO standards.

¶10. (U) At appropriate opportunities, Post should continue to remind the GOA of two key points: a) our assistance is always in-kind via technical advisors, training and equipment and not via any direct financial assistance or funds transfers; and b) funding currently available from the U.S. must be executed before any new FY09 or beyond funding can be considered.

POINTS OF CONTACT

¶11. Department POCs for this program are Albania Desk Officer, Jerry Ismail, EUR/SCE (202) 647-3747, Policy and Program Officer Dave Diaz PM/WRA (202) 663-0102 and PM/WRA Senior CWD Advisor Mark W. Adams (202) 663-0111.

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